

Writing Sample: Web Content

## How to Find the Best Fish-Oil Supplements

By Jennifer Diaz



It's the king of supplements. Once the purview of grandmothers with spoons, fish oil has surged into the 21st century, revealing itself to be one of a handful of super-supplements. A basic nutritional building block, the omega-3 fatty acids in fish oil have proven effective at treating everything from heart disease to depression. But not all fish oil is made alike—some brands provide very little omega-3 per capsule and others may even contain mercury. Here's how to choose a good one.

### Consider only fish-oil supplements that are free of impurities

There are two labels that ensure this and you should choose a product that carries both. They are "Pharmaceutical Grade" and "Molecularly Distilled." Together, these filtration processes ensure that the mercury and other impurities found in almost all of today's fish don't make it into the pill you swallow.

### Look for enteric-coated fish-oil supplements

There are two reasons why enteric coating is a must for fish oil. One is that it will protect you from fishy-tasting after-burps, a harmless but unpleasant side effect experienced by many people who supplement with the oil.

A second reason is that your body absorbs them more efficiently. Enteric coating is a special material which safely escorts the delicate oils through the acid of the stomach and into the intestines where they are then safely released. In this way, more oil makes it past the stomach intact, which means that fewer pills are required for your body to get the same amount of the omega-3 nutrient. This is precisely what you want in a medicine: fewer pills and less money for equal benefit!

### **Look for an omega-3 fish oil supplement with a moderately high EPA-to-DHA ratio.**

EPA and DHA are two forms of omega-3 fatty acid that the body uses in different ways. There is some debate over which ratio is most therapeutic, but the evidence leans toward a higher proportion of EPA being beneficial. This is because the body is able to convert EPA into DHA as needed, but the reverse is apparently not true.

Until the dust settles, fish-oil supplements with a 2:1 or 3:1 ratio of EPA to DHA are probably best. One exception may be pregnant and nursing women, whose bodies require much more DHA than normal; they may want to use a supplement containing more DHA.

### **Favor fish-oil supplements that contain little filler.**

You can tell how much of the oil in your fish oil is filler by comparing the total milligrams of omega-3 fatty acids listed on the label with the per-capsule milligram amount on the front of the bottle. A good, molecularly-distilled fish-oil supplement will contain less than 50% filler. For example, say you look on the front of the bottle and it says, "Fish oil, 90 capsules, 1,000mg," with 350mg of EPA and 250mg of DHA listed on the back. 350 plus 250 is equal to 600mg of omega-3 fatty acids, which means that the other 400mg—or 40%—is filler. This is the typical percentage for a high-quality fish oil. Lower-quality, "drugstore" fish oils contain as much as 90% filler. Again, we're talking about swallowing and paying for more pills to get the same amount of medicine...and you've probably added impurities to the bargain.

Quality in fish-oil supplements ranges widely and finding the best brand can take some shopping around. But with a little detective work, you can protect your health and get the most for your omega-3 money.

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